

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6147

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L KHARTOUM 4474

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OREP (BONKER, DON) MASS, SU, ET, SO

SUBJECT: BONKER-SUDANESE DISCUSSIONS ON PROBLEMS OF
HORN OF AFRICA

1. THE FOLLOWING IS A SUMMARY OF CONVERSATIONS RELATIONG TO THE PROBLEMS OF THE HORN OF ARICA HELD BY CONGRESSMAN BONKER (ACCOMPANIED BY BERGUS AND SALTER) WITH PRESIDENT NIMEIRI (ACCOMPANIED BY MINSTATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS FRANCIS DENG) ON DECEMBER 20, AND CONGRESSMAN BONKER (ACCOMPANIED BY BERGUS, BOGOSIAN AND SALTER) WITH SUDANGOV GROUP CHAIRED BY DENG AND IN WHICH UNDERSECRETARY FOR FONAFF OSMAN HASHIM AND DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF MAJ/GENERAL MAJID HAMED KHALIL PARTICIPATED ON DECEMBER 21. THIS TELEGRAM WAS DRAFTED AFTER CODEL'S DEPARTURE FROM KHARTOUM. WE WOULD APPRECIATE DEPARTMENT'S SHARING IT WITH CONGRESSMAN BONKER.

2. THESE CONVERSATIONS, WHICH WERE EXPLORATORY IN NATURE,
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REVOLVED AROUND A SEARCH FOR MEASURES WHICH FRIENDLY AFRICAN COUNTRIES AND THE U.S. MIGHT TAKE TO COUNTER A SOVIET-INSPIRED ETHIOPIAN THRUST INTO SOMALIA. CONGRESSMAN BONKER GAVE DETAILS OF HIS DISCUSSIONS WITH SADAT, MENGISTU AND SIAD BARRE AS WELL AS HIS OBSERVATIONS OF THE INTERNAL SITUATION IN ETHIOPIA. HE FELT THERE WAS A GOOD POSSIBILITY OF AN ETHIOPIAN INVASION OF NORTHERN SOMALIA AS EARLY AS THE FIRST

QUARTER OF 1978. HE DID NOT BELIEVE THAT DIRECT US MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO SOMALIA WAS FEASIBLE OR EVEN DESIRABLE. WHAT MIGHT BE DONE BY OTHER MEANS TO SUPPORT SOMALIA MILITARILY AND POLITICALLY WAS THEN EXAMINED.

3. NIMEIRI MADE IT CLEAR THAT GIVEN THE STATE OF HIS ARMED FORCES, HE COULD NOT IN PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES SUPPLY MATERIEL TO THE SOMALIS, A POINT ALSO STRESSED BY M/GEN MAJID. AS TO THE DISPATCH OF SUDANESE TROOPS TO BERBERA, NIMEIRI REPEATED THE CONDITIONS THAT HE MENTIONED TO ME IN OUR DEC 13 CONVERSATION, VIZ: 1) HE COULD ONLY SEND 1000 MEN WITH LIGHT WEAPONS THEY COULD CARRY; 2) OPERATION WOULD HAVE TO BE ENTIRELY FINANCED BY OTHERS; AND 3) OPERATION MUST TAKE PLACE UNDER AEGIS OF OAU, ARAB LEAGUE, OR UNITED NATIONS. IT WAS AGREED THAT THIRD CONDITION WAS HIGHLY UNLIKELY TO BE MET. THERE WAS DETAILED DISCUSSION AS TO POSSIBILITY OF SUDAN' SENDING SOVIET EQUIPMENT TO SOMALIA ONCE IT WAS ASSURED THAT IT WOULD BE REPLACED BY WESTERN EQUIPMENT FROM THE U.S. OR FRIENDLY THIRD COUNTRIES. SUDANESE TENTATIVELY EXPRESSED WILLINGNESS TO PROVIDE NINE MIG-21S, A SMALL NUMBER OF SOVIET-BUILT TRANSPORT PLANES, AND SOME SOVIET BUILT HELICOPTERS. ALL OF THESE, HOWEVER, WERE NON-OPERATIONAL AND WOULD HAVE TO BE OVERHAULED AND REFITTED BY WESTERN EXPERTS. IT WAS AGREED THAT THIS PROCESS, INVOLVING THE DELIVERY OF WESTERN EQUIPMENT PHASED IN WITH THE REPAIR AND EXPORT OF SUDAN'S SOVIET EQUIPMENT, COULD PROBABLY NOT TAKE PLACE WITHIN THE

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DESIRED TIME FRAME.

4. NIMEIRI SAID HE HAD TOLD SAID BARRE THAT SUDAN WAS ALREADY EXTENDING MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO SOMALIA IN PROVIDING TRANSIT AND OTHER FACILITIES FOR ERITREAN REBELS. GENERAL MAJID MADE POINT THAT DEPLOYMENT OF SUDANESE FORCES ALONG THE NORTHERN PART OF THE BORDER WITH ETHIOPIA ALSO SERVED TO LIMIT NUMBER OF FORCES ETHIOPIA COULD USE IN OGADEN.

5. IN THIS PART OF DISCUSSION NIMEIRI AGAIN REITERATED HIS VIEW THAT HIS NUMBER ONE PRIORITY WAS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND HE WANTED TO RE-EQUIP HIS FORCES TO PROVIDE COUNTRY WITH SOME SECURITY AGAINST OUTSIDE FORCES WHO COULD THREATEN THAT DEVELOPMENT. HE MADE IT CLEAR THAT HIS MILITARY OBJECTIVE WAS ONLY TO CREATE A MODEST DETERRENT, ASSERTING THAT IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO PROTECT THE SECURITY OF HIS VAST COUNTRY EXCLUSIVELY THROUGH MILITARY MEANS.

6. ON THE POLITICAL SIDE, CONGRESSMAN BONKER PUT FORTH THE CONCEPT OF A REGIONAL ARRANGEMENT IN WHICH WOULD PARTICIPATE SUDAN, KENYA, DJIBOUTI, SOMALIA AND POSSIBLY THE ERITREANS. THIS WAS EXPLORED AT SOME LENGTH AND IT WAS GENERALLY AGREED

THAT THE KEY ELEMENT IN SUCH A PLAN WOULD BE REASSURING THE KENYANS AND PERSUADING THEM THAT THE THREAT FROM A SOVIET-BACKED ETHIOPIA WAS GREATER THAN A POSSIBLE THREAT FROM SOMALIA.

7. FRANCIS DENG WHO HAD JUST RETURNED FROM CHAIRING THE SUDANESE DELEGATION TO THE SUDAN-ETHIOPIA TALKS IN FREETOWN, FELT THAT MORE COULD BE DONE DIRECTLY WITH THE ETHIOPIANS THEMSELVES. HE WAS MILDLY BUT GUARDEDLY OPTIMISTIC THAT BILATERAL SUDANESE-ETHIOPIAN RELATIONS COULD BE IMPROVED. HE ALSO SAID THAT THE PROSPECT OF MENGISTU'S ULTIMATE WILLINGNESS TO COOPERATE IN A NEGOTIATED SOLUTION OF THE ERITREAN PROBLEM SHOULD NOT BE RULED OUT. HE ACCEPTED THE THESIS THAT THE U.S. COULD NOT GIVE DIRECT MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO SOMALIA. HE THOUGHT THE U.S., SUDAN AND OTHER FRIENDLY
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COUNTRIES SHOULD CONTINUE THE SEARCH FOR OTHER DIPLOMATIC POSSIBILITIES.

8. COMMENT: THESE CONVERSATIONS WERE HIGHLY USEFUL IN THAT THEY REVEALED A BROAD AREA OF COMMUNITY OF INTERESTS AS WELL AS CLOSELY SIMILAR APPRAISALS ON THE PART OF BOTH GOVERNMENTS. CONGRESSMAN BONKER PLANS TO DISCUSS HIS FINDINGS AND PROBABLY MAKE SOME POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS WHEN HE REPORTS ON HIS TRIP TO THE DEPARTMENT AND THE WHITE HOUSE. WE WERE HAPPY TO HAVE HIM WITH US. BERGUS

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